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GOETRE FAWR

COMMUNITY COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT LLANOVER VILLAGE HALL & BY TELECONFERENCE ON MONDAY 22nd APRIL 2024 @ 19.45**

**Present**: Community Councillors Owen Dodd, Andy Barnes, Peter Daniel, Janet Robins, Lewis Carter, Nigel Morrey and Community / County Councillor Jan Butler.

**Guests** None.

**In Attendance**: Jonathan Lazenby (Clerk).

**Apologies**: Community Councillor Scott Grayland.

**Absent without Apology:** None

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|  |  | **ACTION** |
| 1 | **Apologies for Absence.**  As above. | Clerk |
| 2 | **Declarations of Interest.**  The Chair commenced by asking the members present whether they had any declarations of ‘interest’ to make, which includes previous declarations already made. The Chair reminded members that they should notify the meeting of any additional interests which became apparent during the progress of the meeting. No further declarations from the members were forthcoming. | All / Clerk |
| 3 | **Chairman’s Remarks.**  Councillor Dodd took the opportunity to welcome everyone to the meeting. |  |
| 4 | **Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th March 2024.** The minutes were proposed as a true and correct record by Councillor Daniel, seconded by Councillor Butler and carried by all those present at the March meeting. The Clerk apologised, as he had omitted to put the closed session minutes on the agenda for approval. He will arrange for these to be added to the May meeting agenda. | Clerk |
| 5 | **Matters Arising**   1. Item 5 (ii) - Loose stonework on bridge 76. The work on the bridge has now been completed. The potholes have also been filled. 2. Item 5 (iv) – Missing speed cushions on Star Road – there is no update at present. 3. Item 6 (i) – The Acres – it is believed the issue may relate to materials being stored nearby on behalf of Network Rail. The pond itself does not appear untidy. 4. Item 9 – Community Planning notes from Councillor Butler – These have now been sent to Councillors Morrey and Carter. 5. Item 7 (v) – The updated wage rates have been advised to all parties. 6. Item 7 (vi) – The new 12-month lease has been signed for Ton Land and the first quarterly payment received. 7. Item 7 (vii) – The Clerk has signed the contract with Merlin Environmental for the dog waste collections for the next 12 months. 8. Item 15 – The sanitary bins have been ordered and delivered. The Clerk suggested that we put a short message on Facebook. He will arrange for a ‘sticker’ to indicate the relevant cubicle in the ladies’ toilets, and will contact phs to ask if they have any. 9. Item 16 (i) – The footpath and plastic flower signs for St Bartholomew’s graveyard have been ordered, and will be installed as soon as they are received. 10. Item 16 (ii) – Our membership with the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management has been confirmed. | Clerk  Clerk |
| 6 | **Maintenance.** (including items previously reported, but not yet addressed).   1. The Clerk reported that the gates at St Bartholomew’s Church and the bench in the graveyard need repainting/staining, as do the facia boards at the bus stop in Llanover. Councillor Carter has identified a local painter who may be suitable and will approach to see if he is interested. Two alterative names in Goytre village were also suggested as alternatives. | Clerk / Cllr. Carter |
| 7 | 1. Payments made since the previous meeting.   Payments included in the **2023/2024** financial year:  **£**    Payments for the current (**2024/2025)** financial year:  **£**     1. VAT Claim The Clerk submitted a claim of £3830.48 for 2023/24, and this was received into the accounts on 10th April. The amount received is £988.83 more than included in the 2024/25 income projection, so provides us with additional monies for the current financial year. 2. Review & acceptance of 2023/24 cashflow and end of year accounts   The end of year Cashflow, Bank Reconciliation and Accounts have been circulated to members in advance and were also reviewed during the meeting. The Clerk confirmed that the Cashflow balances had been verified to the closing balances in the UTB statements at the end of Jan/Feb/Mar 2024, during the Finance Committee meeting on 16th April, with Councillor Morrey signing to confirm in accordance with section 2.2 of the Community Council Financial Regulations (Wales). There was no further comment or observation.  The ‘Balance Sheet,’ together with the ‘Bank Reconciliation’ for the year were also reviewed. The figures on each were cross-checked against the cashflow account, which itself had been verified to the balances in the bank as at 31.03.24.  Acceptance of all three documents, as an accurate record of the transactions and closing financial position as at 31.3.24, was proposed by Councillor Morrey, and seconded by Councillor Robins. All Councillors voted in favour. Clerk to send relevant docs to EH Accountancy.   1. External Audit 2023/24   The external audit papers have now been received for 2023/24, and the Clerk has already started to prepare for both the internal and external audits. This year we will again be subject to the ‘Basic Audit.’ The full three-yearly transactional audit will take place NEXT year. Wales Audit have confirmed the following dates:   * 16th June: Latest date for publishing the audit notice on our noticeboards and web site. * 30th June: Latest date for approving the Annual Return. * 1st July to 26th July (inclusive) – Period for public to inspect the accounts and supporting documents. * 5th July: Latest submission date for the annual Return. * 12th September: The date from which electors can exercise their rights under the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. * 18th September: Wales Audit anticipate issuing audit opinions from this date.   All the published dates are within the normal timescales and should not cause us any issues. In the meantime, the Clerk will follow the usual timetable with sign-off no later than 30th June.   1. Reserves & Budget 2024/25 Clerk advised that our year end reserves had increased to £22,788.07, up from £19,709.54, at the end of the last financial year. The CC originally set a balanced budget, although it regularly underspends this. Overspends and underspends against budget are clearly visible in the cashflow account statement, under 7(iii) above. Based on the above, the Clerk felt the existing budget was appropriate, and at present, no changes are required for the forthcoming year. 2. Finance Committee update inc. Risk Review & Health & Safety schedule The following points from the Risk Assessment, discussed at the Finance meeting held on 16th April were highlighted by the Clerk. 3. Precept    1. Clerk has submitted to MCC who have confirmed receipt.  First payment of 2024/25 precept due end April.    2. Final budget confirmed by Full Council at March 2024 meeting. 4. Loss of Income from the Olde Pounde Shop    1. Rent being received into Unity Trust Bank account. Payments are up to date. Lease expires 28th Sept 2024. However, tenant is unsure whether to renew, due to difficult trading conditions affecting many small businesses. Clerk has checked the lease for any notice period required should tenant decide not to renew prior to expiry. There is no such clause, but we have a right to advertise within six months of the end of the lease. The tenant has confirmed that he will advise the Clerk of his decision when he collects the keys for the electrical safety check scheduled for 7th May. Legal fees of £1000 have been budgeted to cover renewal costs. Building Insurance renewed Jan 2024. Business Interruption insurance in place with Zurich - max £6600 over 12-month period. 5. Reserves – General Adequacy 6. End of year reserves confirmed at c£22.8k, 50% of 2024/25 precept. Clerk considers this to represent an adequate short-term reserve. 7. Reserves – Earmarked 8. Earmarked funds currently stand at £1886 - representing remaining monies from the Micro-Geography Fund. It will be used to support investment in the park / village recreation. 9. Salaries / Wages    1. Wrong Salary Paid - Wages to increase to £11.53 per hour was agreed at March 2024 Full Council. Updated wage details forwarded to Beverley & Williams for payment from April 2024 onwards. Standing orders for the wages now updated to reflect 2024/25 salaries. Employees advised of pay rise. 10. Recovery of VAT payment 11. The claim for 2023/2024 (£3830.48), was submitted to HMRC on 2nd April, and the refund was received on 10th April. 12. Financial Assistance     1. GPoC will not be renewable at 2024 ASM following Councillor Morgan Chandler’s resignation as we will no longer meet all of the eligibility criteria. Statutory powers, and where necessary s137, will be required in future, and recorded in the minutes and accounts as required. 13. Councillors Allowances     1. All Councillor allowances now paid for 2023/24, without reduction of income tax, utilising the annual working from home allowance as per the new HMRC guidance. 14. Training of Clerk / Staff     1. Previously all Councillors attended the Code of Conduct training by Oct 2022. This course has been identified for Councillor Carter to attend as soon as possible.     2. Email sent to S&A Fodden in January asking for confirmation of adequate safety supplies/materials safety guidance/training issues. Confirmation received and held in email in-box.     3. Training Plan reviewed and updated at Jan 2024 Full Council. 15. Insurance     1. Insurance reviewed by Full Council January 2024 and renewed 2nd February 2024. 16. Health & Safety     1. Electrical safety checks for the Public Conveniences and Community Centre undertaken on 16th October 2023. Both certificates now received. 17. Asbestos Monitoring – Olde Pounde shop     1. Survey undertaken by HSL Ltd from Hereford. Is likely there is some asbestos in bitumen coating under the sink unit, but not a danger. HSL do not believe encapsulating is worthwhile and have just suggested warning stickers – now purchased and ‘installed’ by the Clerk. No other action required, but CC will need informing if the unit is ever to be removed. Test results of outside samples confirmed no asbestos.   The **Health & Safety Checklist** update was then reviewed.   1. The three-yearly electrical installation condition / examination and report on the Olde Pounde Shop is due on 10th May. Re-inspection scheduled for Tues 7th May. 2. St Bartholomew’s Churchyard: – The Health & Safety notice for St Bartholomew’s churchyard is on order and will be installed as soon as it is received. There is some movement in the handrail along the path. The Clerk has arranged for the blacksmith from Llangybi Forge to visit and repair as necessary. | Clerk  Clerk  Clerk |
| 8 | **Planning**   1. Updates / future meetings There have been no meetings since the last Full Council. On 18th April we received a planning application (DM/2024/00398) for a proposed conversion of an outbuilding to two holiday lettings. This is at 1 Pen Y Wern Cottage, Pen-y-wern Road, Penperlleni, Goytre, Monmouthshire, NP4 0AB. A meeting of the planning committee will be scheduled to formally consider this application. | Cllr. Barnes |
| 9 | **Community Engagement – Latest update re Community Plan - Councillors Jan Butler / Lewis Carter / Nigel Morrey**  Councillors Butler, Morrey and Carter are still looking to arrange a meeting together. As mentioned under Matters Arising, Councillor Butler has now circulated the notes she made during the Community Planning training. Councillor Carter has also shared the previous Llanover Community plans from 2014 and 2019, to feed into the mix. All confirmed their determination to arrange a meeting asap. | Cllrs.  Butler,  Carter,  Morrey |
| 10 | **Llanover Residents - Biodiversity Enhancements Survey - Councillor Carter**  The survey has now been completed. Eighteen questionnaires were distributed to the residents of Rhyd-y-Meirch, of which about half were returned, and these were supplemented by some door-to-door conversations. Overall, residents were keen to enhance the green, with the favoured approach being a wildflower area, supplemented with spring / summer bulbs, and some simple bench seating. This will be communicated to Jan Clarke, from the MCC Green Spaces team, who will be able to support. (See also item 13 below). | Cllr. Carter / Clerk |
| 11 | **Charge Place Wales - EV car sharing**  Following the March meeting, Councillor Robins shared the presentation slides about the scheme. As a result, it was agreed that we should invite Cyrene Dominguez from [Trydani](mailto:Cyrene@trydani.org) to present at the June meeting, to explain the scheme in more detail, and how, as a CC, we may be able to provide support. (Assuming Councillors were in favour of a local scheme). | Clerk |
| 12 | **County Council update – County Councillor Jan Butler.**  Councillor Butler provided the following updates.   1. Secret Garden – Following the petition, (which received over 1100 signatures), a committee will now look at the options to create a safer turning into the nursery from both the northbound and southbound carriageways. Once reviewed, the committee will share its conclusions and any potential plans with ourselves and MCC. 2. A4042 – Councillor Butler has continued to complain about the condition of much of the road surface between Goytre and Abergavenny. 3. The Well-being café will be holding a fish and chip supper over the bank holiday weekend. 4. ‘Llanover Coffee Morning’, are arranging a trip to the Royal Mint, coupled with a seaside visit, and are likely to approach us for a donation towards this. 5. Ken Skates (Transport Minister) has written to confirm that money for the pedestrian crossing in Goytre has been allocated, and the work will begin this financial year. Councillor Butler noted that workers had been seen undertaking measurements during the past few weeks, and it is believed that design work is ongoing. It is anticipated that the bus stop on the northbound carriageway may have to move northwards to provide space for the crossing. It was agreed that a progress report should be put on the FB sites. | Cllrs Butler & Carter |
| 13 | **MCC Green Corridor Project – Goytre & Llanover Biodiversity Enhancements**  Over the past couple of weeks, Councillors Carter, Robins and Butler (together with the Clerk) have been looking at some green / biodiversity enhancements to the two villages, with Jane Clarke, Green Infrastructure Project Officer at MCC.  Cllr. Carter has primarily been leading the way with Llanover (as part of his survey), and Cllrs. Robins and Butler have been focussing on Goytre Park and the wider village.  Following a meeting held in the park, Jane has made several suggestions, which are detailed below:  Goytre Park Top Wilded Area   1. Create wildflower meadow seed/plugs/turf around newly planted trees. 2. Two specimen trees such as bird cherry (good for wildlife, blossom and shade), with a bench. 3. Bug and bee hotel. 4. Sow yellow rattle into other 2 existing wildflower beds (although it appears we are too late for this growing season and will need to sow in the Autumn). 5. Small Circular Bee sign to show we are enhancing these areas. 6. To slow water draining onto football field using natural flood management. 7. Where Bog appearing at corner of football field – create small wetland/bog with aquatic plants. 8. Plant shrubs along bank (parallel to school lane) to absorb water flows.   There was some concern at the suitability of having a wetland area in a children’s play park, even if there would be no ‘pond’ as such. It was felt that further consultation would be advisable on this element of the scheme. Councillor Barnes thought that a proper drainage system would be a better approach, although Jane Clarke had indicated that due to the expense, her project would not be able to meet the cost of this. However, Councillor Morrey believed that an open ‘French drain’ ran along the edge of the field by the village hall, which was probably now blocked. The Clerk said that he would investigate this as a separate issue.  Goytre Park fenceline with Road  New hedgerow down to village hall, (leaving the views outside the bar, and the vista in front of the MHA properties), plus small section of car-park at the back of village hall. The hedge would likely be field maple, hazel, crab apple etc. (but not hawthorn/blackthorn).  Highfield Green Space – wildflower meadow, specimen trees hedgerow  May require rocks to prevent parking.  Councillors commented that some consideration may need to be given to the needs of residents’ parking, and plans (from some time ago), to build a footpath through from/to Laurel Drive.  [Fairfield x2](https://maps.app.goo.gl/DW6BKhcBSF4gP8kU9)  There are two green space areas on Fairfield - possibly owned / managed by Monmouth Housing.  Newtown Road  There is a green verge as the road diverges from the rail line.  Llanover   1. Rhyd-y-Meirch green space - post Cllr. Carter’s consultation with local residents – see item 10 above for conclusions / recommendations 2. St Bartholomew’s   Plant a wildflower area to the north eastern side of the church, (which we believe is unsuitable for burials).  The initial cost will be met by MCC, as will any ongoing maintenance. The exception to this, would probably be St Bartholomew’s, as GFCC owned. However, as we are just proposing a wildflower bed here, the plan would be to let it re-seed itself. MCC is keen to partner with the Community Council or local volunteers to help maintain these habitats, if local residents are interested.  After further discussion, Councillors were fully supportive of the proposals, with the exception of the wetland area, and the potential loss of parking on Highfield, which they felt needed further consideration / community consultation.  This was proposed by Councillor Morrey, and seconded by Councillor Robins and carried unanimously. | Clerk  Clerk |
| 14 | **Bee Friendly Status - Councillor Janet Robins** Councillor Robins explained that achieving Bee Friendly status was part of our biodiversity action plan, and as we are already doing a great deal on this front, it should not be difficult to obtain. There are basically five criteria:   1. Food – providing pollinator friendly food   sources. 2. Accommodation – logs / bee hotels etc. 3. Being free from pesticides. 4. Fun – involving the community / school –   perhaps getting the children to study the key  pollinators visiting flowers. 5. Future commitment.   Councillor Robins agreed that she would begin completing the application form to see where we had any ‘gaps’, following which Council could put together an action plan for the remaining areas. However, it is likely that the Green Infrastructure Project, (item 13 above), would help achieve most of any outstanding items. |  |
| 15 | **Goytre Recreation Park**  Councillors Dodd & Robins held an on-line meeting with MCC to discuss the new equipment at Goytre park, during which the following was established:   * MCC have confirmed that the s106 money is secured if we make a start with engagement and procuring of items. * Jonathan Wassal (JW) to send images and costings, including a Kompan piece of equipment, a seesaw, trampoline, and a trim trail. We have asked him to look for more dynamic pieces of equipment for age range 5-12. * JW to find out most popular pieces of fitness equipment. * We need to measure up to see where the goal/netball ends are best to go and decide if we have 1 or 2. Surface can be adjusted in size if need be. * As GFCC is planning to do a face-to-face engagement, Mike Moran felt there was no need for a separate on-line survey.   Disappointingly, despite several email chasers from the Clerk and Councillor Robins, the equipment choices to share with the community have still not been received. Councillors were concerned that the clock to use the funds continues to run down, and the plan to engage with the community on a face-to-face basis and establish a consensus of opinion, is facing similar tight timescales. The May meeting is not ideally suited to discuss equipment options, as much of the time is allocated to the Annual Statutory Meeting. However, delaying until June would severely limit the time available to arrange a face-to-face engagement event and have the outcomes prior to the summer recess.  In light of the continued delay and lack of any tangible progress, Councillors felt that the green light should now be given to the purchase and installation of the two goal / netball ends (suggested by MCC), on the lower park, as these were the only alternatives being considered for this area. It was agreed that they be installed across the football pitch, towards the Haven end, with the exact position and splay of the artificial surface (to maximise the residual space for football etc), to be determined by MCC. This would cost c£30k, leaving just short of £50k to cover the children’s play equipment for the top section.  It was still proposed to engage with residents regarding the choice of playground equipment, although given the tight timescales, it was thought that this would now best be achieved using some form of on-line survey, via the CC Facebook page.  This was proposed by Councillor Barnes, and seconded by Councillor Daniel and carried unanimously. | Clerk |
| 16 | **Village Committees’ Reports – questions based on previously distributed updates.**   * Goytre Village Hall   + Two new classes started this month, both have been welcomed. The AGM is scheduled for the 20th April, at 7.30 PM. Otherwise all other events are being well attended. * Llanover Village Hall   + No report submitted * Goytre School Governors   + Struggling like all other schools in the area. However, children are keeping upgraded in their learning abilities.   + Mike Gough thanked the Community Council for their help towards the Eisteddfod funding. The beginning has gone very well and the choir are now entering the next stage. * Goytre Community Centre   + A successful Quiz Night was held raising £120   + We are awaiting details of transfer of lease.   + We were successful in bidding for a Keep Wales Tidy package garden and will be asking for help from the community to install shortly.   + The energy audit has been done and there will be a follow up meeting to agree measures that can be taken with help to access funding. * Other Reports   + The Clerk reported that there are now new responsibilities for separating ‘commercial’ waste which apply to business and other non-domestic organisations e.g. Community Councils, Churches, Community Centres, Village Halls, Litter Pickers etc. A copy of the new regulations will be sent to us shortly. We do not generate much in the way of waste, and so it is unlikely to impact on us significantly. There will be much greater impact on the village halls, school club etc. |  |
| 17 | **Donation requests.**   1. Hedgehog Highway - £150 (deferred from March meeting). This item (for a box of 50 hedgehog highways surrounds and information leaflets), was originally discussed at the March meeting and deferred until today, for further consideration. Councillors were unsure that there would be sufficient take up amongst residents, given the need to cut holes in fences for the highway surrounds. Councillor Robins had approached the Community Garden, but they had not shown any interest in the scheme. Councillors were still keen to try and implement some practical support, and requested the Clerk contact the scheme to see if there were any alternative options we could implement. The Clerk will therefore contact the charity to discuss alternatives and will place the item on the May agenda for further discussion. 2. National Eisteddfod Appeal (unspecified sum). Councillors have only recently donated £250 to the Goytre Fawr Primary to enable the choir to attend the Urdd Eisteddfod. The school has successfully progressed through the first two rounds, and will now attend a further stage of the competition. As a result, it is anticipated they will approach us for further financial support, given the cost of transport. Therefore, it was agreed that at this stage, a further ‘general’ donation to the Eisteddfod movement would not be supported, with funding reserved to support the involvement of local residents. This was proposed by Councillor Morrey seconded by Councillor Dodd and carried unanimously. 3. Llangollen Eisteddfod Appeal (unspecified sum)  Again, as above, because of the recent payment to Goytre Fawr Primary, a donation to the Eisteddfod movement was not supported. This was proposed by Councillor Morrey, seconded by Councillor Dodd and carried unanimously. | Clerk  Clerk  Clerk |
| 18 | **Communications**   1. Communications Received  It was recommended by Councillors that the ‘Empty Homes’ email from the MCC Housing team should be placed on the CC Facebook page. 2. GFCC Facebook page – latest posts / responses There was nothing to report at present. | Cllr. Carter |
| 19 | **Advertising** - **Usk and Raglan Diary contributions July/August 2024.**  The closing date for submissions for the May / June edition will be towards the end of May. There were no articles to submit at present |  |
| 20 | **Date of next meeting and close.**  The next meeting is to be held on **Monday 20th May.** This will commence with the Annual Statutory meeting at **19.45,** followed by the ‘ordinary’ May meeting at approximately **20.30**.  The venue to be Llanover Village Hall, and by teleconference via: <https://meet.jit.si/GoetreFawrCommunityCouncil> | All/  Clerk |

Chairman: **…………………………………** Date:**…………….**